

## Friendship by lapits (nadagio)

**Series:** Choosing To Love [2]

**Category:** Stranger Things (TV 2016)

**Genre:** Implied/Referenced Child Abuse, Pre-Relationship, Swearing, Underage Drinking, friends to better friends

**Language:** English

**Characters:** Billy Hargrove, Steve Harrington

**Relationships:** Billy Hargrove/Steve Harrington

**Status:** Completed

**Published:** 2017-11-11

**Updated:** 2017-11-11

**Packaged:** 2022-04-02 14:47:31

**Rating:** Teen And Up Audiences

**Warnings:** No Archive Warnings Apply

**Chapters:** 1

**Words:** 1,552

**Publisher:** archiveofourown.org

**Summary:**

Steve finds Billy drunk and his nurturing instincts kick in. Billy resents all the questions and nearly gets them both killed. But. They're fine, so whatever.

## Friendship

### Author's Note:

Could be read stand-alone. Just know that they're friendly now and Billy is less of an ass than he used to be. \*hand-waves\*

Billy wasn't at school today, but Steve wasn't too concerned. He wasn't Billy's keeper or anything. They were friendlier these days, sure, but that wasn't saying much when their starting point was so... *not* friendly. Billy was probably just sick, it was that time of year after all.

Steve briefly considered checking on him, bringing him some soup just to be nice. But Billy had conspicuously *not* invited him over. Ever. Even after hanging out at Steve's place a few times. So... Steve would just wait and see him at school tomorrow or the day after or whenever.

Because Steve had convinced himself that Billy was home sick, and because Steve had consciously decided not to seek him out, it was something of a shock for Steve to walk outside after basketball practice and find Billy leaning against the hood of his car in the parking lot.

Drinking from a brown paper bag with one eye bruised and nearly swollen shut. Christ, the guy just had no self-preservation instinct.

“Couldn’t wait for me to get started?” Steve asked him, unlocking the car and throwing his bag into the backseat.

“Steve!” Billy said, opening his arms wide in welcome and grinning too happy to be sober. “You’re late!”

Steve made a show of looking at his watch. “Nope. Practice let out right on time. Where’ve you been, Billy?”

Billy dropped his arms. Shrugged and took another sip from whatever was in the bag. “Around,” he said. “Was waitin’ for you.”

“Could have waited in class. And practice. Without the alcohol.”

“You know what?” Billy sighed, exaggerated and noisy. “You can be a real downer. Real far down.” He held up one hand and then lowered it down by his thigh in demonstration.

“Maybe you’re just too high to know when I’m being reasonable.” Steve frowned. “You’re not *actually* high, are you? Being stoned on top of drunk, on school grounds, during the day? That’d be stupid even for you.”

“Steeeeeve.” Billy said. Stepping close, leaning in until their faces were inches apart. Steve didn’t flinch away. “*You’re* stupid.”

“Gee, thanks.”

“It’s okay.” Billy put a hand on his shoulder. Looked into his eyes, all serious. Whispered with a smirk, “I like you anyway.”

“I like you too, Billy.” Steve reached for the brown bag, gently removing it from Billy’s grasp. “Mostly. Would like you even better sober. Probably.”

“Hey!” Billy made an uncoordinated swipe for the bag but Steve was too quick for him in this state, reaching inside for the cap and screwing it on before putting the booze inside his car with his bag. “Tha’s mine!”

“I’ll give it back later, promise.” Steve led Billy to the passenger door and opened it up. “How about we go to my place? Sound good?”

“Fine. Whatever.” Billy got in the car, pouting and sullen. “Asshole.”

“Sure, *I’m* the asshole,” Steve said. He walked around and sat in the driver’s seat. Started the car. “Put your seatbelt on, Billy.”

“Fuck off.”

“Such a charmer.” Steve reached over and buckled the seatbelt for him.

The first half of the drive was silent. Billy scowled and looked out the

window. Steve glanced at him frequently and tried to pretend he wasn't worried. Eventually he broke.

"You beating on somebody else, now?" Steve asked. "I might get jealous."

"Shut the fuck up," Billy said.

"Just wondering if there's a guy somewhere needing a hospital or something."

"You don't know what the fuck you're talking about."

"I'd know more if you told me."

"I don't need to tell you *shit*."

"Don't need to, sure. But I thought we were friendly now."

Billy finally turned to look at him, glaring with the one eye he could still use reliably. Steve stopped at a traffic light and watched him warily.

"So?" Billy said. "Just 'cause... maybe you don't *hate* me. Doesn't mean I owe you my fucking life story."

"Not asking for your life story," Steve said. Slow and careful. Sometimes dealing with Billy felt like walking blind into a minefield. "Just wanna know if there's someone out there bleeding who might need help."

"Fucking noble asshole," Billy sneered, looking away. The light turned green and Steve started moving again. "NO. No one but a smug bastard with a hard fist. Would fucking *deserve* to bleed."

"Okay... Thank you," Steve said, thinking about what that might mean and not liking any theories he considered.

Billy snorted and slid lower in his seat.

"If, uh..." Steve tapped on the steering wheel with his fingers. "If you *do* ever want to... share. Anything. You could. If you want. I'd listen."

Barely had the words been spoken before Billy was lunging sideways to grab the steering wheel out of Steve's hands, pulling it clockwise with a jerk. The car swerved. Steve screamed and slammed on the brakes. The car stopped *hard* and their bodies whipped forward only to snag against their seatbelts.

A few shocked moments of silence went by and then Billy was unbuckling, opening the door to get out and stagger away from the car. Steve pulled over properly, parked, and got out to follow right behind. He was breathing heavily, still shaky with adrenaline. His neck was already stiff with something like whiplash. They could have *died*. Billy could have fucking *killed them* pulling that shit.

“WHAT THE FUCK!” Steve shouted after him. “WHAT THE FUCK WAS THAT, BILLY!?”

Billy kept walking, hands stuffed into his jacket pockets and shoulders slumped.

“Billy!” Steve said, catching up with him. He put a hand on Billy’s shoulder and the guy spun with a snarl, knocking away Steve’s hand and giving him a shove back for good measure.

“Fuck off!” Billy said.

“Fuck you!” Steve said right back. “Tell me why you’re running off, you fucking suicidal dipshit!”

“That!” Billy’s finger was right up in Steve’s face making pointing, jabbing motions that Steve had to lean back to avoid. “That. Right there! You always think you gotta *know* things. You don’t know shit!”

“So tell me!” Steve said. “If I don’t know shit, then fucking *tell me!*”

“Shut the fuck up. That’s not what this is,” Billy said, hand shaking as he reached inside his jacket for a packet of smokes. “I don’t know what rainbow colored fantasy-land you’re living in, Harrington, but we’re not that. We don’t hold hands and whisper secrets and fucking cry about our *feelings* like some pansy-assed bitches.”

Steve frowned. He watched Billy light up a cigarette and wondered what exactly *this* was, then, if not two people who could fucking *talk*

to each other.

“We’re friends, aren’t we?” Steve thought they’d established that much, at least, but Billy shook his head with a laugh that was anything but friendly.

“We’re *convenient*, Harrington. We’re two losers stuck in this piece of shit town, looking for another loser to fuck around with, killing time. That’s all.”

And oh, wasn’t that a punch to the gut – to hear exactly how little Billy thought of him, how little Billy cared. For a long minute Steve couldn’t say a word, could just watch as Billy took a long drag from his cigarette.

It was a reasonable facade of carelessness, of not giving a shit like he said. But looking closer Steve saw how Billy’s eyes avoided his, how his shoulders hunched, how his whole demeanor spoke of something sad and vulnerable and just the opposite of his usual hyper-aggressive, overconfident posturing.

Steve realised that however much Billy’s words screamed “fuck off,” his body language begged him to “stay.” However much Billy laughed and said he didn’t care, he was still talking, still *present*. Billy hadn’t left, and was instead waiting for Steve to walk away.

It would be so easy. It might even be justified. Steve didn’t owe him shit. Steve didn’t have to stick around and put up with this asshole’s brand of crazy. All he had to do was walk away. They could probably still hang out, even. Listen to music, drink beer, lift weights, complain about homework. As long as Steve didn’t ask any questions, didn’t try to get to know the person behind the asshole, things could stay the same.

Or he could make a different choice. Take a chance.

Steve took a step closer.

“Sounds kinda shitty,” Steve said, reaching for Billy’s cigarette to take a drag. “I’d rather have a friend.”

Billy’s face twisted. Tears welled up and spilled from his eyes and

Steve pretended not to notice.

“And you think I’m your guy?” Billy said. His laugh was meant to be mocking, but it shook. “You don’t listen very well, do you?”

“Not to bullshit, no.” Steve felt a certain glee in saying that. *Bullshit*.

“It’s not bullshit, asshole.” Billy drew himself up tall and sneered. “We’re not friends.”

“Sorry, what?” Steve turned his head, bringing a hand up to cup behind his hear. “Couldn’t hear you over the sound of your own bullshit.”

Billy gave up, deflated, shook his head. He said, “You’re fucking weird.”

Steve shrugged. He offered up the smoke, threw an arm around Billy’s shoulders, and steered him back toward his car.

“Makes us a perfect pair, then, doesn’t it?” Steve said.

“Fuck you too.”

“Get in line, amigo.”

Billy’s laugh was weak but genuine, and Steve figured they’d be okay.

#### **Author's Note:**

Thanks for reading!